

Public Opinion Polling

Types of Polls

1. **Traditional Telephone Polls**—Many pollsters use random digit dialing for listed and unlisted numbers (both landline and cell). Results are adjusted to make sure the sample accurately reflects the demographic factors of the actual population
2. **Exit Polls**—Used by media on election day—Question every tenth voter leaving the poll. Used to predict the outcome of the contest.
3. **Tracking polls**—Taken on a daily basis to monitor short-term campaign developments and the effects of campaign strategy. Usually involve small samples and are conducted every 24 hrs.

Conducting the Poll

1. **Determine the Content**—what questions do you want answered?
2. **Phrasing the Question**—Questions must be carefully worded to be unbiased. Pollsters must be careful not to word questions that would trigger a specific response.
3. **Selecting the sample**—Determine whose attitudes the pollster wishes to measure. Samples must include the entire “universe” of which they are interested. Each person within the sample must have approximately the same chance of being selected. About 20 respondents are selected from each unit to be interviewed for a total of 600-1000 people.
 - A. **Random Sample**—A method of poll selection that gives each person in a group the same chance of being selected
 - B. **Stratified Sample**—The population is divided into subgroups and weighted based on demographic characteristics of the national population. Within each subgroup, smaller and smaller geographical units are chosen until the pollster is able to get an accurate random sample. 15,000 contacts may need to be made in order to reach the number of respondents needed to minimize the margin of error.

Contacting Respondents

1. **Telephone**—most common way
2. **Person-to-person interviews**—some agencies like this model others feel it leads to unintended results

Analyzing the Data

1. **Margin of Error**—Measure of accuracy of a public opinion poll. All polls contain inaccuracy but the typical margin of error if 1000 people are asked is +/- 4%.
2. **Sampling Error**—Accurate polls occur when each person within the universe has an equal chance of being asked. Errors occur when a poll fails to sample a certain population, usually the poor and homeless.